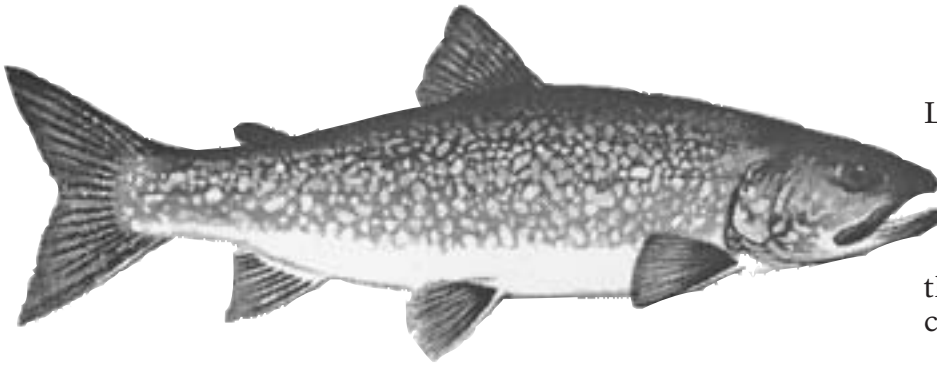


Yellowstone

Lake Trout Threat

Yellowstone National Park
P.O. Box 168
Yellowstone, WY 82190



Lake trout (*Salvelinus namaycush*), which are not native to Yellowstone Lake, threaten the future of the lake's native Yellowstone cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki bouvieri*) and the many animals that depend on cutthroat trout for food.

Why Do Lake Trout Pose Such a Threat?

Yellowstone Lake contains the largest inland cutthroat trout population in the world and provided an almost museum-pure home for them for thousands of years. Now the native cutthroat trout are severely threatened by non-native lake trout. The problems are caused by the differences between the two kinds of fish:

- Lake trout are voracious predators and will eat Yellowstone cutthroat trout up to $\frac{3}{4}$ their size.
- Adult cutthroat trout spawn in dozens of small streams around Yellowstone Lake.

- Because they use shallow waters, cutthroat trout are available to fish-eating animals such as bald eagles, osprey, pelicans, cormorants, gulls, otters, and grizzly bears.
- Lake trout spawn in the waters of the lake itself.
- Lake trout also spend significant time in deep water, where they are out of reach of most predators.

If lake trout become the dominant fish in Yellowstone Lake, the ripple effects throughout the ecosystem could be disastrous, with far-reaching consequences for predators, anglers, and Yellowstone cutthroat trout.

What The Park Is Doing

Each year, the National Park Service conducts intensive gillnetting to remove lake trout. Gillnetting generally begins in May, as soon as ice is gone from the lake, and continues into October. Since the mid-1990s, almost 450,000 lake trout have been caught. Gillnetting also provides valuable data about the population size, age structure, maturity, distribution, and potential new spawning areas that lead to more effective control of this species.

In August 2008, a scientific review panel overwhelmingly recommended park managers significantly increase lake trout removal immediately. Toward this goal, the park has contracted with a private fishing company to increase the take of lake trout. See the reverse side of this bulletin for details and updates.



Anglers & Boaters Can Help

- Consider fishing for lake trout. Annually, anglers take approximately 9,000 lake trout from Yellowstone Lake.
- You must kill all lake trout caught in Yellowstone Lake and its tributaries.
- When you catch a cutthroat, treat it gently and release it properly.
- Avoid gill net & trap net areas, which are marked by buoys. (*See illustrations on reverse side of this bulletin.*) Two flagged buoys mark a gill net; a three flagged buoys and six yellow anchor buoys mark a trap net.

For More Information

Yellowstone Fishing Regulations includes tips for identifying lake trout.
www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/fishing.htm & www.greateryellowstonescience.org



A Private Fishing Company Joins the Effort

The National Park Service has contracted with Hickey Brothers Fisheries, LLC, owned by Dennis and Jeff Hickey of Baileys Harbor, Wisconsin. Their crew, led by Todd Stuth, is based out of Bridge Bay Marina.

Why is a private fishing company needed?

The National Park Service (NPS) hopes a private fishing company can substantially increase the number of lake trout taken from Yellowstone Lake.

Why was this company chosen?

Hickey Brothers was chosen based on its lake trout and technical expertise, experience, capacity, and safety record. The company has done contract fishery research on the Great Lakes and on large lakes in Montana and Idaho, and has worked cooperatively with other federal and state agencies.

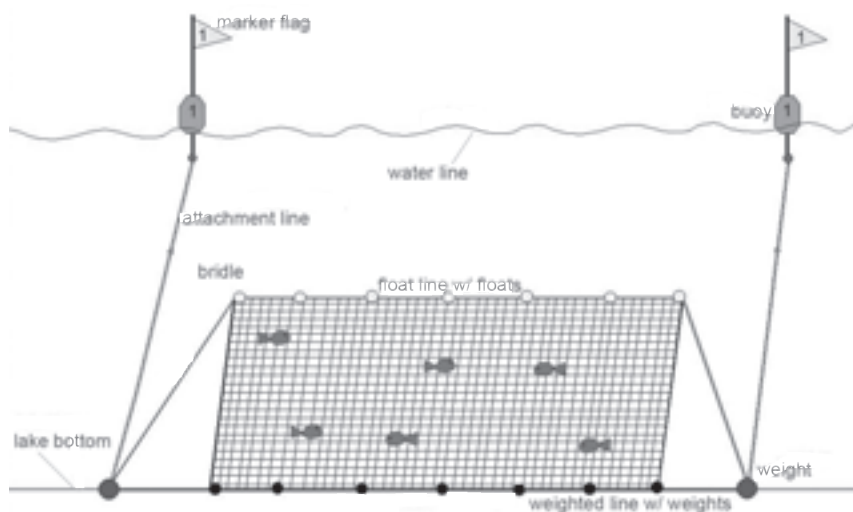
How is the company increasing the catch?

Hickey Brothers operates the research vessel *Sheepshead*, which can efficiently set 18,000 to 27,000 feet of gill net each day in Yellowstone Lake. It can also set nets in a serpentine pattern that catches larger fish effectively. In the three-week trial period during 2009, Hickey Brothers caught more than 14,400 lake trout at an average of 4800 per week. During 2010, the crew will be fishing for ten weeks.

Hickey Brothers also will be deploying four trap nets. This gear has been used successfully to catch lake trout in the Great Lakes and in lakes in Montana and Idaho. Trap nets are up to 50 feet tall with a lead line up to 900 feet long. Fish remain alive in trap nets; cutthroat trout will be released, lake trout will be killed.

Are these nets dangerous to boaters and anglers?

All nets will be deep enough to allow safe boating. But anglers should avoid fishing near nets (gear could get tangled); boaters should avoid traveling between a trap net and the shore (shallow lead lines could pose a hazard). Net locations are available from Bridge Bay Marina and Grant Village backcountry office. Gill nets will have flagged buoys at each end; trap nets will be marked with three flagged buoys as well as six anchor buoys (round yellow bobbars about a foot in diameter).



Gill Net (above)

Gill nets are invisible to fish. Small fish can swim through the mesh; large fish cannot. Their gills become caught in the mesh and they suffocate.

Trap Net (below)

Trap nets are meant to be seen by fish, which are funneled into the trap box. Fish remain alive in the trap box.

